

Against You Alone

*On Judgement, the Soul's Self-Witness, and the
Two Responses That Remain*

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Abstract

This essay examines the moment of Judgement not as an external verdict imposed upon the soul but as the soul's first complete self-witness – the moment at which the chain of interference that obscured the will throughout temporal life is permanently removed, and the soul sees what it built, what it chose, and what it oriented itself toward, exactly as God always saw it. Drawing from Psalm 51, Genesis 3, the parable of the talents, and the film character of Jenny Curran(Forrest Gump), it argues that the deathbed is not the crucial moment – every crossing of the Now was the crucial moment. At Judgement the alibis collapse not because they are refuted but because the noise that sustained them is gone. Two responses remain: the confession of David, against you, you alone, and the confirmation of the will that would not serve. The essay further argues that every sin except pride carries shame – the soul's partial recognition through the interference that its will moved away from what it was ordered toward – and that pride alone arrives at Judgement as it lived: composed, certain, and choosing still.

Keywords

Judgement; soul; will; pride; alibi; David; Abraham; Non Serviam; contingency; lemniscate; self-witness; mercy

Against You Alone

There is a moment in the film Forrest Gump that does not announce itself as theology and is theology precisely because of that. Jenny Curran, dying, says to Forrest: *I wish I could have been there with you*. She is not blaming him for his absence. She is witnessing herself – partially, imperfectly, through the thinning interference of a body approaching its end – and what she sees is not what she accomplished or experienced or became.

It is what she missed while she was orbiting. The contingencies she circled throughout her life – ideology, rebellion, sensation, the next cause, the next person – are not named. They do not need to be. They are simply gone, and Forrest is still there, as he always was, and she sees it. Too late for the life she had. Not too late for the soul's final orientation.

That moment is the closest temporal life gets to what every soul will encounter entirely at Judgement.

The devotional emphasis on the deathbed – the crucial moment, the final breath, the last prayer – while not wrong, can obscure something more fundamental. The deathbed is not the formation of the soul's orientation. It is the place where the interference begins to thin and the soul begins, partially and imperfectly, to see what it built across an entire lifetime of choices.

The crucial moment was not the last one. The crucial moment was every crossing of the Now – every act, every omission, every deferral, every thing done and left undone, every talent used and buried, every hungry face seen and unseen. Throughout this series, the lemniscate names that recurring structure: the figure-eight of temporal existence in which the soul crosses the present moment again and again, and at each crossing the will orients or fails to orient toward the ground of its own being. The will was being written at every crossing.

And every night, in the thinning before sleep, the soul rehearses the deathbed. The senses dim. The passions quiet. The discursive loops slow. The self begins, partially and imperfectly, to read what it wrote that day. Sleep is the miniature deathbed; the deathbed is the complete one. What death

reveals entirely, temporal life rehearses continuously in fragments.

Judgement is where the soul reads the book entire.

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Before the reading, consider what Judgement removes.

Throughout temporal life, the soul is buried under a chain of interference. The senses deliver a world already shaped by the body's hungers and fears. The passions set that delivery on fire — desire, grief, anger, pleasure — the emotional weather inside which all thinking occurs. Discursive reason runs on that material, through that weather, in the loops of memory and anticipation. And the soul — deeper than the chain and not reducible to it — is not destroyed by this. It is buried. Knowing all the while. But unable to see itself clearly through the noise running on top of it.

Death removes the chain. Not temporarily, as contemplative practice removes it partially. Permanently — root and all. The senses stop feeding the passions. The passions have nothing to respond to. The discursive loops find their supply severed at the source. And the soul, stripped of everything that was obscuring it from itself, sees its own will entire — not in fragments, not through the distortions of self-justification, not through the alibi that temporal life makes available and necessary — but directly. The way God always saw it.

The soul does not need a judge to call witnesses. It is its own witness. It does not need a prosecutor to assemble evidence. The evidence is the will itself, finally visible in its full formation — every act and omission and deferral, every crossing

of the Now, the complete trajectory of what the recurring crossings built. The soul looks at this and recognizes itself. Not accused. Not sentenced from outside. It simply knows – as God knows – and in knowing, it speaks.

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Two men speak before this moment, in temporal life, with a clarity that anticipates it. They are worth holding together.

Abraham, interceding for Sodom, approaches God with this: *Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, I, who am but dust and ashes.* This is not performance. It is not the affected humility of a man diminishing himself for rhetorical effect. It is accurate perception. Dust and ashes is the correct ontological description of a contingent being standing before the non-contingent ground of all being. Abraham sees what he is in relation to what God is – not with terror, not with self-contempt, but with precision. And from that accurate seeing, he speaks freely, boldly, negotiating for the lives of the just. The humility is not the posture adopted before speaking. It is the perception that makes genuine speech possible.

This is what the soul at Judgement will have entirely – the accurate perception of what it is in relation to what God is, without the noise of temporal self-construction that spent a lifetime building the self up into something that could negotiate on more comfortable terms.

David has already arrived there, partially, through the weight of what he did and the grace that allowed him to see it. Psalm 51 is the most philosophically precise confession in scripture. *Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in*

your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.

Not against Bathsheba, whom he took. Not against Uriah, whom he had killed. Not against Israel, whom he failed as king. Against you, you alone. David is not minimizing the harm done to Bathsheba and Uriah. He is seeing, with the clarity that the soul will have entirely at Judgement and that David touches here through grace, what sin actually is at its root. Every sin is ultimately the soul disordering its will away from God – choosing something other than the ground of its own being, orbiting a contingent thing as though it had the gravity only the non-contingent possesses. Bathsheba and Uriah suffered. The sin – the act of the will, the orientation chosen – was against God and God alone, because God alone is the one against whom the will can be finally and fundamentally disordered.

David does not say: the woman was beautiful and you made beauty. He does not say: power corrupts and you gave me power. He says: *I have done what is evil in your sight.* Not in his own sight, filtered through self-justification. In your sight. David is, for a moment, seeing what God sees – and agreeing with what he sees. *You are right in your verdict. You are justified when you judge.* The verdict is not received as an imposition. It is recognized as correct. This is what the soul at Judgement does – not because it is forced to agree, but because the interference is gone and the soul can finally see what God always saw and could not unsee.

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Now consider the alibi that Judgement destroys – and how sophisticated it becomes when fully developed.

Adam, confronted by God in the garden, does not confess. He constructs. *The woman you gave me* – the blame moves immediately to Eve, and then, with extraordinary subtlety, past her to God. You gave me this woman. You constructed the situation. You placed her here. You made me capable of this. The chain of contingency is traced backward through every link until it arrives at its first cause – and the first cause is indicted.

But the alibi does not stop there. Consider what it implies at full extension: *I did not ask for a woman. I was at peace alone. I had my garden, my animals. You insisted – you said it was not good for man to be alone. You gave her to me. And now you use her against me.* The defense has reached back to creation itself. The fault is not the serpent's. Not Eve's. Not even the weakness of human nature. The fault is the design. You made me this way. You placed me here. You are the first cause of everything that led to this moment – including this.

This is the alibi at its most complete, its most human, and its most devastating. It is not entirely false. God did make Adam. God did give him Eve. The contingencies were real. The chain runs back to its source. And yet – at Judgement, stripped of the noise that made this feel like a sufficient defense – the soul sees what Adam's alibi concealed. Every crossing of the Now. Every moment the address was present. Every instant the mercy was available. Every choice the will made when it could have made otherwise. The alibi requires the noise of temporal life to maintain its plausibility. In silence, it collapses – not refuted, but simply seen through.

And so two responses remain. Exactly two.

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I have sinned against you, Lord. The prodigal son, who came to himself and said: I will arise and go to my father. The publican, who would not lift his eyes. The thief on the right cross, who had nothing left but the accurate perception of what he was and what the man beside him was. The soul that sees its own will entire – every act and omission, the full formation of the recurring crossings – and offers it back without defense. Not because the confession earns anything. Not because it reverses what was built. But because it is the alignment of the soul's knowledge with God's knowledge – the soul finally agreeing with what God always saw – and that agreement is, in its structure, the beginning of what Heaven is.

Non Serviam. I will not serve. The soul that sees its own will entire and confirms it. Not in confusion. Not deceived. Not able to claim the serpent lied, because the serpent is not in the room. Not able to say the woman led me here, because the woman is not in the room. Seeing clearly, without interference, with full knowledge of what it is choosing and what it is refusing – and choosing still. How much of the soul's self-deception survives into that moment, and in what form, remains one of the genuine mysteries of eschatology; what can be said is that the will, formed across a lifetime of crossings, arrives at its final orientation – and that orientation, freely built and now fully seen, is confirmed. This is what makes the doctrine of Hell not an injustice. The soul in Hell is not a soul that wanted Heaven and was denied it. It is a soul that sees, in the full light of what it is and what God is, what ordering itself toward God would require – and says, freely, finally, without the noise that made the refusal feel reasonable throughout temporal life: I will not.

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Every sin carries shame. This is important and worth stating precisely.

Lust knows it used what it should have loved. Sloth knows it buried what it should have cultivated. Anger knows it destroyed what it should have protected. Greed knows it held what it should have released. Even the man who hid his talent was afraid — and fear is the soul's partial recognition that it was given something whose weight it refused to carry. The shame is not pleasant. But the shame is honest. It is the interference thinning enough for the soul to glimpse, however briefly and partially, what Judgement will show entirely — that the will moved away from what it was ordered toward, that a crossing was missed, that the address was present and the turn was not made.

Pride carries no shame. And this is why pride is the root of all sin and the only one that arrives at Judgement without flinching.

Pride is not confusion but assertion. It is the creature claiming the grammar of the Creator. God says: *I AM WHO I AM*. The proud man adds ***I am who I am — and I do not resemble anyone.*** It is the anti-Exodus, the refusal of dependence, the denial of contingency. Pride does not merely sin; pride abolishes the category of "above." It carries no shame because it recognizes no standard higher than itself. And so the proud man moves through temporal life without the partial self-witness that shame provides, accumulating crossings without ever glimpsing the ground he is turning away from.

Every other sin knows, however dimly, that it violated something above itself. Pride has already decided that there is nothing

above itself to violate. The self is the standard. The will is the measure. And so the proud soul moves through temporal life without the partial thinning of interference that shame provides. It accumulates without the glimpsing. It orbits without the vertigo that might, in another soul, become the beginning of a turn.

And it arrives at Judgement exactly as it lived. Head straight. Composed. Certain.

The other souls arrive having carried shame – the partial, distorted, noise-covered witness to their own disorder. The proud soul arrives having carried nothing of the kind. It sees clearly for the first time at Judgement – and what it sees does not surprise it, because it was never surprised by itself. It sees God, and sees itself, and sees the orientation of its own will entire. And in that clarity, with full knowledge, without the serpent and without the woman and without the alibi and without the noise – it makes the assessment it always made.

I will not serve.

Not in anguish. Not yet in the weeping and gnashing of teeth that is the eternal experience of what that choice costs, seen without the anesthesia that made it bearable while it was being made. In the same composure it carried through life. The freedom exercised throughout the recurring crossings of temporal existence, arriving at its final and irreversible expression.

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Abraham saw it before the moment arrived. I who am but dust and ashes. The accurate perception of contingency before the non-contingent – and from that seeing, the freedom to speak, to

intercede, to approach without alibi because there was nothing to defend.

David saw it after the sin and before the death. Against you, you alone. The alibi collapsed not by argument but by grace – the interference thinned enough for the soul to see what God saw, and to agree with what it saw, and to find in that agreement not condemnation but the mercy that was present at every crossing and is present still.

Jenny saw it at the edge, imperfectly, through the thinning chain. *I wish I could have been there with you.* The contingencies unnamed and gone. The one constant still present. The soul beginning to see, too late for the life it had, what was always available.

And every soul, at Judgement, stripped of the chain entirely, sees what these three touched partially – its own will, its own orientation, the full formation of what the recurring crossings built – and speaks.

Two words. Two directions. Two eternities.

Against you alone – or Non Serviam. There is no third response. There never was. The temporal life was the period in which the response was being formed. Judgement is the moment it is finally, fully, and forever known.

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